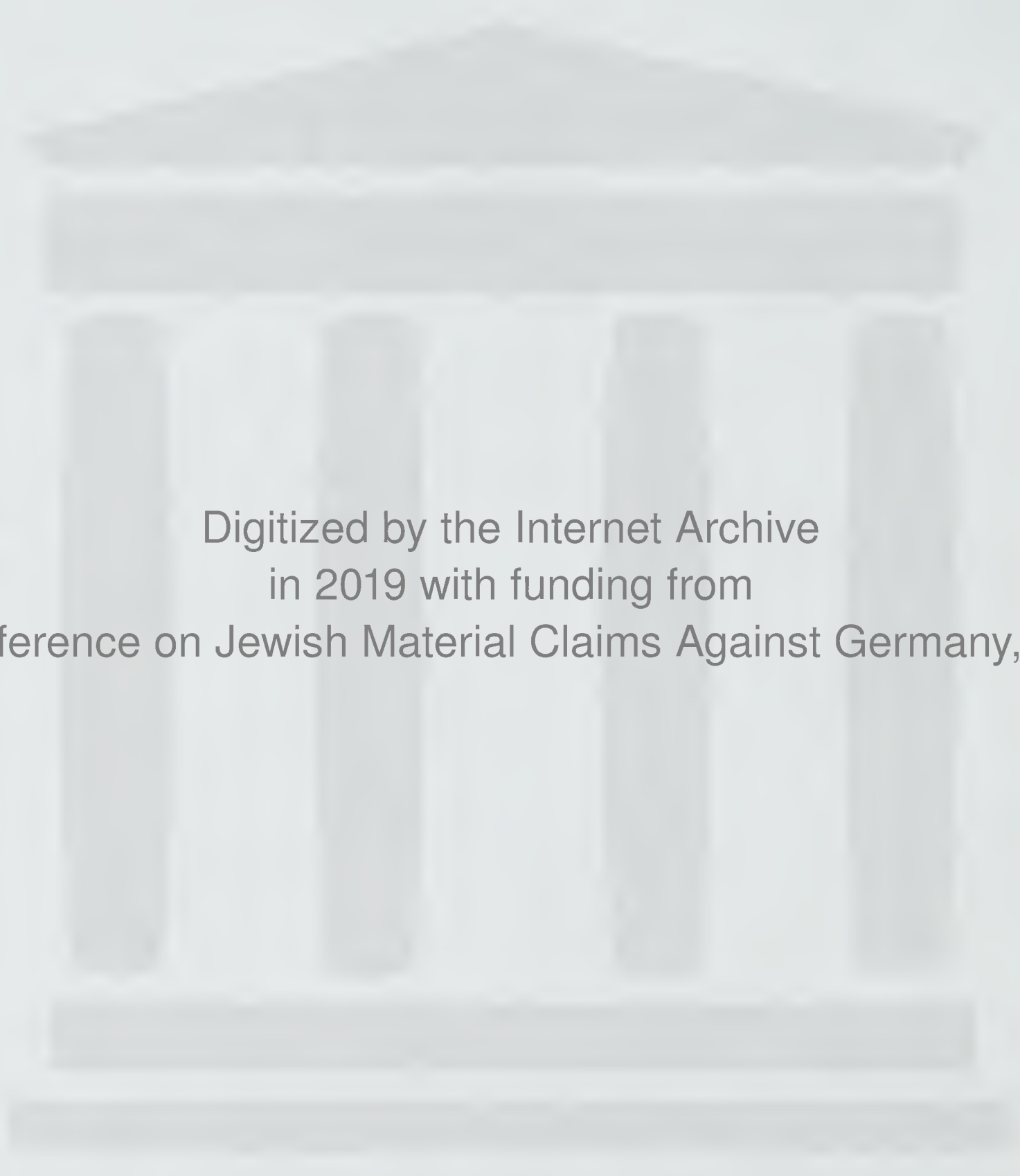


ועידת התביעות
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Against Germany

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Family Memories

Memories of Georg Hollaender, born July 11, 1894, died December 10, 1979, written in the form of letters.

I was born in the last century (1894), one of six children. My Father died early, on as medical science was not very advanced then. I was $4\frac{1}{2}$ years old, not yet in school. We lived in a small town, Samter, near Posen, in Germany. At age 6, I went to school. Life was difficult for my mother, raising the children by herself, to provide clothes, etc. The oldest child was 8 years old, the youngest 4 months old, my brother Alex, who became a scientist.

My Mother also ran the business, buying hides from the butchers, dealing with tanners and selling leather to shoemakers. At that time there were no shoe factories in the area, all shoes were handmade and the tanning process was very simple.

In the house she had a maid and in the business one unskilled laborer. My Mother worked very hard to make a living to feed and clothe us, but she managed very well.

When I was 14 years old I had to leave school to help my Mother and was glad to do this. At 16 years old my Mother felt I should learn the trade at another place of business and so I went, as an unpaid apprentice, to Berlin to work in a leather business there. My Mother sent me 100.-Mark to live in a boarding house where I also ate my meals. The evenings I spent at a gymnasium, but often got free tickets to the theatre to be "claque," which means to applaud at certain times or at a signal. At times I went to the theatre or opera as an extra.

After working six months, I was paid 50.-Mark a month having done so well. I wrote this to my Mother, to send me less money now, knowing how hard she had to work to raise all the children. When I was 18 years old, I went home and helped the family. Meanwhile my two older sisters married.

When the first World War broke out in 1914, I enlisted, was sent to the front in 1915 in March. I took part in the battles near Arras from April to June, very heavy battles, the front moving forwards and back again. Many of my fellow soldiers fell in battle or were wounded. I, myself, was buried alive in a trench by grenade fire, but was dug out after twelve hours. I was in deep shock, taken to a field hospital, where I stayed for two months, then shipped home, flat on my back, staying there for three months.

Now I was ready again to do service, did duty behind the lines while recovering further. After six weeks I went back to the front in France, taking part in the battles near Verdun. More about these battles later. Again I lost friends, had to bury some, as it was impossible to carry them back behind the lines. Many were wounded. I was gassed by poison gas and spent two months in a field hospital.

Now I was sent on to Reims where the front was then. There were big battles at Chemin de Dames, very heavy fighting. I was often very lucky, the mortars falling to my left and right.

In 1917, many of us were taken prisoner by the French. I passed through several prisoner of war camps, finally arriving on

an island in the Atlantic Ocean. I stayed there until 1919, after the war had ended, then was sent to Northern France to work. Not until 1920 was I let go. I had been away from home for six years and now had to start to make a living, to start over. I was 26 years old.

So far I only described my youth and the war years, but left out many details. Now I want to remember some lovely moments. Our small town where I grew up was made up of three social groups divided by religion. About 50% was Catholic, 49% was Protestant and 1% was Jewish. The majority of the children went to parochial schools, but there was an agricultural school and a middle school for girls where more affluent parents could send their children.

All these groups got along peacefully. Everyone had respect and tolerance for each other. There was little industry in the area, mostly agriculture. The Jews went to Synagogue, the Christians to Church. Jewish shops were closed on Friday night and Saturday. Since trading was mostly in Jewish hands, the Christian farmers came to town on Sunday rather than on Saturday. First they went to church, then to the shops that were open for a few hours after church services so they could do their shopping. In this way the Jewish families could keep a restful Shabbat. All went to services and all was pleasant.

On Friday, very often, Russian Jews arrived, fleeing military service in Russia because of the terrible anti-semitism and persecution. These Jews would come to services on Friday

evening and most families took some of them home for dinner and overnight. On Sunday these people went on their way to the next town till they reached a port, like Hamburg or Rotterdam, to take passage to England or America. Many Jewish organizations helped them along. In this way the large communities of Jews were founded overseas.

At home we children were very interested in the stories these people told. Often my Mother took two guests like these home. Now imagine our large dining room table where we were often not seven, but nine or ten, a white tablecloth, all enjoying a good dinner. There were candles lit, light for the rooms was given from kerosene lamps, all of us in a happy Shabbat mood. I can still remember the happy Shabbat atmosphere. If I were an artist I would paint this scene. Of course, all talked!

For Passover we had a very large celebration. Once I was ten years old I conducted the Seder, unless one of our relatives came. For Shabbat and all the holidays we went to services as a family, dressed beautifully. The men then still wore top hats.

Those travelling through were provided with food for their journey. There were no cars then, everything and all moved by horse and carriage or by train.

Trains connected the small towns and took us to the nearest large town, Posen. There was an opera in Posen as well as theatres and department stores. To go to Posen was a great event for us children. Trains had four classes, the cheapest being fourth, where many farmers' wives travelled with their baskets

lined up in the middle of the car, themselves sitting on benches along the sides. Everyone lived very frugally. Twice a year there was a fair. We children were given 10 Pfennig, now like 2 cents, to buy something.

More about the schools. When I was little, till I was nine years old, I went to the public school near where we lived, then on to the agricultural school till I was fourteen. At this time I took an examination and passed it, which meant that I had to serve only one year in the military after I turned twenty one. As the first World War broke out in 1914, as I told you previously, this rule was voided and the war, for me, lasted six years, including the years as a prisoner of war.

Now a small anecdote. While I was at the agricultural school, where we were all boys, we often teased the girls in the girls school, especially in winter. There was always deep snow in winter in our area and we loved to "wash" the girls with snow, throw snowballs at them, but also throw snowballs at the teacher as she walked passed our house. We were really bad and she wanted us to apologize to her. I didn't want to do this so my Mother did it for me, saving me from severe punishment. Only as I got older, 12-13 year old, did I apologize myself, to spare my Mother the embarrassment.

When the weather was nice in winter, my Mother would hire a large horse drawn sled for us to make an excursion. Of course, we could only do this on a Sunday. We'd be out for two-three

hours, get home very cold. There also was a small lake for ice skating.

In 1910, our town got sewers and running water, a great luxury for us. After that came electricity, which made life much easier. Before all this, our toilet had been outside, in the court yard behind the house, very unpleasant, especially in winter. All this is hard to imagine today. Our winters were very cold, as much as -20 Celsius, well below freezing. Water pipes would freeze.

Now back to my memories of the first World War. Not long after my birthday, July 11, 1914, the war broke out, in August. I was twenty years old, should not have been called up having one year dispensation. But there was mobilization, all reserves were called up. There was great enthusiasm since all believed the Germans would defeat the French in three months. In this enthusiasm I volunteered and was sent for training right away. All of us recruits from Samter were sent to Jovratschim (Province of Posen) the next day, given uniforms and put up in kasernes. We were in groups of 20 per room. We would practice marching for days, weeks and months, carrying about 60 lbs. on our backs. These backpacks held underwear, extra boots, a tent for overnight and all things necessary to keep clean.

My Mother was not pleased that I volunteered. She worried about me and also needed me to help her in the business to earn money to provide for our family and also a stepson. I had expected the war to be ended in a few months and to get home

again. It all turned out differently. When I left home, my Mother, who let me go with a very heavy heart, gave me five pieces of gold, worth about 20.-Mark then, in a small leather pouch that I put around my neck to be used only when I was in dire need.

After Jovatschin, I was sent to the fortress Posen into the fortifications. We kept training for weeks on the grounds there, simulated battles and shot at targets. All this went on till February 1915. The war had brought heavy losses in troops moving across Belgium into France and in the East into Russia.

In February our regiment was shipped to France by train and attached to a group that had suffered heavy losses, dead and wounded. This division was situated in the North of France, near Arras. At first we were kept in reserve, but were hit by our first artillery fire, by cannon. We suffered our first losses and had to dig in. Two days later the French attacked our front line, but we repelled them. We were able to advance several hundred meters, till we made contact again. Now we had to dig in again. For days we lay in these holes in the ground connecting them by trenches. We were under steady grenade fire. One morning we went on a massive attack and were able to take the French line. The dead and the wounded lay everywhere, were carried away by medics. We also took prisoners who had to be led away after they threw away their weapons.

Now we had to dig in again, dig trenches and build shelters. We were situated 200 meters from our enemies who were also dug

in. As soon as someone stuck their head above the trenches shooting started. All this went on for weeks and months. One day we came under very heavy bombardment and I became covered with mud and groundwater. Fortunately I had enough air in a little hole and was able to breathe. Several hours later they dug me out. I was in shock and couldn't stand. I was very dizzy. This happened in June 1915. At the hospital where I was taken they gave me medicines to calm me down and to help me sleep. The heat was oppressive and contributed to my troubles. After two weeks I was shipped to Duren, in the Rheinland, by hospital-train and after some time on to Samter, to the military hospital. I recovered there for two months. While there I could go home often, even help my Mother in the business. At the end of this period I was sent to Constance, on the Bodensee, for further recuperation. Soon I started practicing and exercising with weapons. I got leave once and went to Samter, 1200 KM by train. On weekends I took trips to the Black Forest, or as far as Freiburg, where I had a girlfriend. All this ended soon. In November 1915, I was sent back to the Western front, joined another regiment that had suffered heavy losses. We were stationed near Verdun, took part in the heaviest battles of this war lasting about a year with some interruptions. It was a miracle that I survived. Some battles were man to man! I took some prisoners. One could stay on the front line only one or two days, in rain and mud, unable to sleep, attacking or being attacked. It is unbelievable what a person can do and suffer.

One had to shoot the enemy at a few paces distance, otherwise one got shot. In one word: Horrible! When I think of all this I shudder. I cannot put it all into words.

One day, in the back of the front line, my group had to fetch food from the field kitchen about 300 meters behind the front. This was done in the dark, of course. Walking across the field was difficult. There was artillery fire. We had to throw ourselves down and take cover. Suddenly I felt ill, put on my gas mask and in this way saved myself. Poison gas grenades were being shot at us. I inhaled too much chlorine gas and remained on the ground till morning till I was found. I was taken to a field hospital again and given oxygen. While I recovered I was often dizzy, but had no other symptoms.

A hospital train took me to Wurzburg in Germany, where I was treated with medicines, given breathing exercises, a lot of rest and later on sport and games. I had to stay outdoors day and night, under a roof when it rained. As soon as I recovered, I was sent to a garrison in Rastadt where we lived not in kasernes, but in casemates of the fortification. Some more practice and training, then back to the front. By now it was 1917. At first I went back to Verdun, a difficult time, January, February, March. A desperate time, the cold winter, snow, rain. My job was group leader. I didn't need to carry a rifle, just a pistol. We patrolled, attacked under fire. Verdun became a little quieter.

In March I requested leave to visit my Mother and family since I had not been home in a long time. I was given two weeks around Easter and travelled to Samter. What happiness, when I got home in time for Passover. All our friends were warm and friendly. My Mother was as happy as I was.

After the visit I had to return to the front at Verdun. When I arrived my regiment had been transferred to another part of the front, the Chemin de Dames, where we were posted on a mountain. We repelled many attacks, a horrible sight, as the French rushed us, hundreds of soldiers fell under our fire. Day and night, often lit up brightly by tracers and flares, always at the ready.

In the morning one day we came under especially heavy fire, artillery, as well as cannon fire. We could only find cover in the holes made by the shells. I think this took place in early May 1917, in the early morning, about 5 a.m. It was a lovely day, the sun was shining. One of my best comrades was injured. Suddenly we came under fire from our backs and were overrun by the French. We had no choice but to surrender, throw away our weapons and raise our hands. This is how I became a prisoner of war. Later we found out that during the night the French had broken through our lines, about 1 KM to our side, over the top of this mountains and closed in on us from the rear.

With raised hands we had to walk to the French lines, first up the mountain, then down on the other side, walking into the German artillery fire. The Germans kept on firing from afar. We

suffered further losses at this time. Later I heard that about one thousand German soldiers were taken prisoner that day.

I was very lucky all this time. God held His hand over me. This had nothing to do with bravery!

Now about my time as a prisoner of war. I think this happened on the 5th of May 1917. I had climbed up the North side of Chemin des Dames with my platoon under heavy fire. We tried to get to the top where our front line was. There had been heavy losses and we went to reinforce the line. We arrived at the top about 2 a.m. and were to occupy 500-1000 meters with one hundred men. Across from us were the French, at about 200 meters. We hid in shell holes, it was a clear night, lovely weather. After two hours the sun rose and it was warm. We came under heavy shelling, many were wounded, some were killed and the medics were busy. They also had to take cover. Next to me lay several wounded. About 5 a.m. I received orders to lead my section in an attack but couldn't because of the heavy shelling. I also couldn't let everyone know and so our attack stalled. We took cover again in shell holes. This is when we were overrun by the French who had broken through and came at us from the rear cutting us off from our lines. They assembled all the German prisoners, still under German fire. We were thirsty and had no food this night. By morning, another beautiful day, we walked about six KM behind the French lines, still being bombarded. Finally we reached a fenced off area, no barracks, where we were given some water. Next day we had to retrieve the wounded from

the frontline, carry them away on stretchers and to some wagons that took them to hospitals. After two weeks we were walked about 10 KM to a railway station. We were loaded on cattle cars and taken to a camp near an airport. We were put to work, I was the leader of about 200 men, building roads and barracks. Our food consisted of bread, soup with a little meat of very bad quality. Often we were given beans infested by worms or beetles. Later on they gave us a shirt and a pair of pants so we could change. Since I knew a little French I had to keep the contacts and was responsible for carrying out the orders. After a few months we were given the responsibility of taking care of the planes and to get them ready to fly. Here I got the idea to escape. I stole a compass, but didn't know what to do with it since I didn't know how to fly. Not far from our camp, about 3 KM, was a camp for officers where some of us had contacts. I tried to convince some pilots to come to our camp, but this escape plan was discovered and I was punished.

My punishment was solitary confinement for thirty days with just bread and water. The worst was that I had stolen the compass, theft! I was not allowed back into the camp, but shipped off with other prisoners who had committed serious offenses, to St. Nazaire, a port on the Atlantic Ocean. We travelled by train to work there on ships. This was the port for the Americans to supply their troops from there. From here I also tried to escape to reach the front, but I failed.

Now it was already 1918. I was punished again for trying to escape. After 30 days maybe 300 of us were transported to the penal island, Isle de Raie. This infamous island lies in the Atlantic Ocean. Napoleon was held prisoner there also. This was a small island fortified against attack from the sea. In the casemates were dayrooms for the military, one couldn't see the ocean, could only hear the waves beat against the walls. It was terribly lonely, terrible food. Once a week we could walk to the beach for one hour under heavy guard. We were guarded at all times, but were able to play cards and to exercise in the yard. From home we received small packages with food and books which we exchanged. These packages arrived via Switzerland.

The guards told us about the war. When the war ended in 1918, we hoped to be sent home soon, but this remained a hope for two years.

At the end of 1918, we were taken off the island under guard, of course, and sent to Northern France by train. We were to work rebuilding the country so destroyed during the war. At first we had to search for land mines. These lay everywhere, some unexploded and very dangerous. Many exploded, killing and maiming. Then we had to fill in the trenches and start to rebuild the villages and streets. Now we were fed a little better, even received beer or wine sometimes.

The farmers were happy that we were working for them and sometimes gave us a little food. All this lasted two years, till

we could return to Germany. In May or even April 1920, we arrived back home.

While we were in this camp, near Arras in the North of France, we lived in tents, about 40 beds in each. Each of us had a box under his bed with his meager possessions, some underwear, extra shoes and mail from home. We were allowed to write once a week and waited with longing for our mail, also some small packages of 1 KG, with some cheese, tinned meat and sweets. We were paid a small sum of money and could buy some fruit in the camp.

Since we were rebuilding houses, we were in touch with the local population who sometimes gave us coffee or cognac. Some of my fellow prisoners got involved in love affairs with local women, then contracted diseases with very bad results. These men ended up in hospitals for treatment of rashes all over their bodies. It was very difficult for these boys to avoid temptation. The women couldn't talk to the men, but concerning love they understood each other.

I had a very sad experience with a good friend. He had studied to become a teacher, but then was called up for the army. We spent a lot of time together on Isle de Raye and also in the camp in the North of France working. One day he caught a bad cold, got a high fever, but wanted to stay in the camp. His bed was next to mine. I took care of him and got some medicines for him from the first aid station, but the fever stayed high. Even during the night I sponged him with cold water. One day he no

longer needed to be sponged, he had died. He left his wallet containing pictures of his mother with me. He was an only child. He also left his silver watch on a chain. Since I had his mother's address, I had to notify her. During the battles of the war I had seen many soldiers die, having to take their dog tags off, bury the dead, but the case I just described touched me deeply and made me very sad.

After I returned to Berlin, I went to see his mother and brought her the few possessions he had left. The army had never notified the mother. As a memento of her son, she gave me the silver watch chain that I kept for a long time.

In the spring of 1920, a large transport of soldiers went home. I was able to join this group. First we were taken to the Rheinland, to a camp, given civilian clothes, a suit made of paper, a coat, underwear (one set) and shoes. We received some paper money and a train ticket to Berlin. I couldn't go right home since my home was now part of Poland instead of Germany. I needed a visa from the Polish consulate.

In Berlin I was met by my step-brother, Adolph, who was studying law. He was the son of my Father's first wife, having been raised by relatives. Later he married Margot Heifron who moved to then Palestine after his death. (He committed suicide after the Nazis took power in Germany.)

I had to wait in Berlin for a few days till I got my papers. Then, I went on to Samter, was met by my Mother and two unmarried sisters, Hanna and Bertha, as well as my brother, Alex. We were

all so very happy, of course. On Shabbat we went to Synagogue where I was called to the Torah and said special prayers of thanks. The Rabbi gave a special sermon to greet me and welcome me home. The whole congregation, family and friends celebrated my return.

After a short time a reaction to the war set in. I got terrible headaches, was dizzy, had fear of open spaces and had to walk with a cane. I had trouble crossing the street, felt the need to hold on to the walls. This all lasted for months till I got a little better. Then I could work a little in the business. Again I bought hides and skins and sold the leather to the shoemakers.

My Mother was of little means since she had married off two daughters, Cilla and Hedwig. They had married good men, but after giving them trousseaus, she had to give them more money as dowry so the husbands could start out in business. In 1921, my sister, Johanna, got married, again getting a trousseau and a dowry. Not much later my sister, Bertha, the last one, married and received the same as her sisters.

In the fall of 1920, I had recovered enough to really work again. I had only minor problems, but my fear of open spaces and headaches stayed with me for many years. I was able to enlarge the business, also exporting to Germany. Monies for the marriages of the last two sisters could come out of current income! My Mother and I travelled to Schlesien, to a spa. After a few days I left her there and went back to work.

My sister, Hedwig, widowed during the war when her husband got pneumonia, started a small clothing business in Köpenick, near Berlin. Next to the store was a small apartment and she lived there with her small children, Heinz and Eva. Hedwig worked very hard, earned well and provided for her children.

Conditions worsened daily in Samter and Posen. My Mother and I felt the need to leave. I didn't let my Mother return from the spa, but took her to Berlin--Köpenick, to my sister Hede, with whom she could live. Of course, I gave my Mother money to live, but she was uncomfortable in the small apartment. At the end of 1922, early 1923, I was able to get a larger apartment if I bought the building. I decided to do this right away so that my Mother could soon move into the new apartment. In the meanwhile, I liquidated the business in Samter and sold the house for a pittance.

This is the end of the written memories. Georg Hollaender worked in Berlin only a short time, then moved to Leipzig where he was employed by Firma Neumann, as a specialist in the trade of small animal skins.

Memories of Renee Hollaender, nee Roth. 1906 - 1994

Some of my memories go back a long time, some are even of historic events.

On June 28, 1914, my parents attended a big garden party with many relatives and friends. Suddenly, a county official came and whispered something to the host who paled at the news, then asked for quiet to make the announcement: The Austrian crown prince, Count Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been murdered in Sarajevo. The party ended.

Since that day the world changed. Of course, there had been many tensions before. The empire had many problems with the various nationalities. In Russia there was crisis after crisis with the Czarists. I couldn't understand all this then, being eight years old. Just the same I remember this Sunday, June 28, 1914. War was declared against Serbia and in short order Austria and Germany were at war against Russia, France, Belgium and soon England, even against Japan. On May 23, 1915, my birthday, Italy also became an enemy, declaring war on the side of the Entente. That day is unforgettable also, being my birthday.

We lived in a lovely villa outside the town, across from a cavalry caserne. One of my uncles, a doctor, was called up immediately at the start of the war. He always came to our house for the noon meal, only a few steps from his practice in the caserne. One day in September he arrived and we could see he had

cried. He had just received the news that his youngest brother had been killed at the Russian front.

In our town, Hodonin or Góding, we had a German and a Czech high school. In our family we went to the German high school. When the war ended in November 1918, our town became part of the Czech republic and everything changed. The German high school closed just after my oldest sister graduated. My middle sister, Helene, two years older than I, went to Brno, or Brunn, and finished high school there. I went to the Czech high school for one year, but after that my parents sent me to a boarding school in Vienna. I stayed there one year, then went to live with a family. My sister, Helene came from Brno and we lived there together. We were very happy there. Helene studied at the Technical College, became an engineer-architect. I studied less hard, learned languages and music at the conservatory. I took many courses and received my diploma as interpreter for the French language.

My eldest sister, Lies, married and moved to Leipzig in Germany. She had three daughters. Around the middle of December 1927, she called me in Góding and asked me to come to Leipzig for three weeks to live in her house and supervise the help and the children while she and her husband, Sigford, took a vacation in Sicily. I agreed, arrived on the 16th of December and they left on the 18th, on their way to Taormina.

Good friends of theirs and I took them to the train station, and after the train left, this couple, Pelz, asked me to go to

the movies with them and afterwards out for dinner. The name of the film was "The Way of all Flesh." Emil Jannings was the star. During intermission the lights came on and we saw two gentlemen in the box next to ours. My hosts knew them and they were introduced to me. The Pelz' were planning to go to a lovely restaurant with music and the two men asked if they could join us. We all went together and had a very wonderful evening. The Pelz' left early and the two gentlemen asked me to stay on. Finally at one thirty they took me home to my sister's house. Heavy snow had fallen in the meanwhile, so we still threw some snowballs. These gentlemen were Georg and a friend.

When he got home, Georg called me on the telephone and we still talked for a long time. Next morning very beautiful flowers were delivered for me from Georg. From then on I received flowers or candy every day.

On the 24th, Georg told me that he would spend Christmas with his Mother in Berlin and left that evening. On the 25th, he called me, told me that he was back in Leipzig. He felt that I was so alone for the holiday and asked me out to dinner. I was free and glad to have the company. We had dinner at a wine-restaurant at the railway station. On every table stood a small Christmas tree, decorated and lighted. Very festive. After this we went out every evening, also New Year's Eve, met some friends and generally had a very good time. One day Georg asked me to marry him! My answer was that I had to ask my sister, since I knew very little about him.

My sister and brother-in-law returned in early January, but my bother-in-law had to leave right away for London on business. On Sunday morning it was arranged that George would come to meet Lies. About ten in the morning the chambermaid came to my room and said that this would be my engagement day! Such beautiful roses had just been delivered that they had to be for my engagement. I went downstairs to my sister, who was very proud to be in place of my parents. Once Georg arrived the tension left and we got engaged! We called my parents to tell them what had happened, to tell them the news. Unfortunately my Mother was not well and could not travel, but a week later my Father came to Leipzig, where meanwhile my brother-in-law had returned.

I went home with my Father and not too long after, Georg came to Hodonin to meet my Mother and family. We were married in August, in Prague, about half way between Hodonin and Leipzig so that Lies, very pregnant, could attend. Our honeymoon took us to Juan les Pins, then to Geneva to visit my old governess who had cared for me and my sisters and taught us excellent French.

In January 1930, our daughter, Erika was born, after a very difficult delivery. I had to stay in the hospital till May and a baby nurse took care of Erika at home.

The Nazis took power in 1933. That summer we took our vacation on the Island of Rugen-Sylt. On our return, while walking in the park, Erika complained of pain in her stomach. She woke up crying in the night and we had to call the pediatrician who came at 5 a.m. He immediately called a surgeon

who also came right away. He carried the child into his car and we drove to the hospital. Before 8 a.m. she had been operated and her appendix removed. We were lucky with the outcome and after two weeks brought her home.

In 1929, my parents had moved to Baden bei Wien where we visited them often. In Germany, after 1933, things got worse for us Jews all the time. They even made it difficult to travel to Austria. In November 1934, my Mother fell seriously ill and she died soon, at age 59. I had arrived at her side just in time. She was a very warm, intelligent person who had written several plays. One play she wrote in honor of the 60th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph. This play was accepted by the Emperor and my Mother received a medal from the court. Another play she wrote about the battle at Aspern (near Vienna) when Duke Karl defeated Napoleon.

My sister, Helene, who worked in Vienna as an architect, took a trip to Palestine in 1933. She saw good prospects there and stayed on, never returning to Vienna. The beginning there was very difficult, but she found work and later became very well-known as an architect there.

Georg worked for a Christian firm in Leipzig. The management there asked him not to consider emigrating as times got harder for Jews and many left Germany. They assured him that they would stand by him. But in 1938 the company was warned by the Nazis that the whole company would be considered Jewish if the Jew, George, continued working there. Just the same, we had

thought of emigrating quite late. I took our daughter, Erika, to Prague to live with a family who cared for more children. Then I returned to Leipzig where we tried to arrange emigration.

In March 1938, the Germans marched into Austria and annexed it. I called my cousin, Emmy, and asked her if I could do anything for her after the annexation. She said yes and I travelled to Vienna the next day. She wanted me to take a diamond necklace and a large solitaire, both very valuable, to London. Her husband, a very rich industrialist, had already fled to Prague since the Germans would certainly arrest him if they could. I took the night train back to Leipzig. The border had been lifted at Passau. In the morning I showed Georg the jewelry. We decided that I would travel that same night to London and Georg would go with me since this was a very dangerous trip. As it happened, we still had passports as Jews. Georg had his passport because he travelled often on business and I because I had been to Palestine two months before to visit my Father, who now also lived in Palestine, in Tel-Aviv and was very ill.

So Georg and I left for London by sleeper. The conductor had collected all the passports well before the Dutch border at Bentheim. I became very nervous knowing how thorough the inspection would be at the border. I was wearing the necklace, stones turned in, but still quite visible in my nightgown. I was also wearing the ring with the stone into my hand. I was in the upper bed, in the dark, and Georg was in the lower, with a small night light on. The Germans came in, asked Georg where he was

going and for how long, gave him back his passport and left. I quickly took off the necklace and the ring, pushed them both between the sheets towards my feet. The door opened again and the customs agents came in again. They wanted to know why I hadn't spoken up before. I told them I was still sleeping since it was past midnight. One officer said: Jews!, then turned off the overhead light, left after giving me my passport. A few minutes later we were in Holland. I needn't describe how happy we were to have escaped a bad fate.

In Vlissingen we took a ferry to Harwich. But, before we left, I sent a telegram to Emmy saying that we had had a good trip. She understood. In London I gave the jewelry to my bother-in-law, Sigford, who now lived there with my sister Lies and their three daughters. He kept the jewelry in his safe through the war years and when Emmy came to London after the war to collect it, Sigford gave it back to her. During the Nazi years Emmy went through hell, a prisoner of the Germans, held and mistreated by them in several concentration camps.

In the summer of 1938, the Sudeten crisis began. Benes, the Czech president, was ordered to come to Berlin. Afterwards Neville Chamberlain signed the agreement in Munich, ceding all of the Sudetenland to Germany.

At the end of September were the Jewish Holidays and the political crisis at a high. I travelled to Prague to bring Erika back as war seemed imminent. I left Leipzig in the morning by train, got to Prague towards evening. Since we were not allowed

to carry any money out of Germany, I had only a few coins and tried to phone a friend of Georg's, who usually was at a certain coffeehouse every evening. He really was there, had just walked in. He had already been called up by the reserves. His own car had been confiscated by the military, but since he was an officer he had a service car available. He came right over to Massaryk station, then took me to the house where Erika was living.

Prague was blacked out, an air attack by the Germans was expected. Erika was asleep, a gas mask next to her bed. The lady who took care of Erika packed her things, got her ready very early and I picked her up, driven again by our friend, Mr. Vogel. He had taken me to a small apartment in Prague Georg and I had kept there and he picked me up there again early, before 7 a.m. He lent me some money and took us to the train station.

Only military trains went to Bodenbach, the border to Germany, but I pleaded with the soldiers and they let us get on. We thanked Mr. Vogel very much, for he had been very helpful! Several hours later the train finally left, and we rode through northern Bohemia to the border. There we found a large crowd of people wishing to leave for Germany, England, Scandinavia. They had been stranded there for several days already, since no trains had moved for days.

It was a real war atmosphere and I was devastated. Suddenly I overheard a man say that he knew a taxi whose driver was willing to drive towards the border as far as possible, but that he, himself, did not have enough money to pay the asking price.

I asked this man where I could find this taxi, went to that garage and settled a price with the driver. Erika and I got in and drove to where this man was who had told me about the taxi. He got in and we drove towards the border, almost 20 KM. There the roads were blocked, full of tank-traps. We had to get out. I paid the driver with all the money I had from Mr. Vogel. The man who had shared the taxi refused to pay anything at all.

Now we had to continue on foot, through the woods, uphill, past barricades put up by the Czech army. In the middle of the woods we were stopped by Czech military. But when I spoke to them in Czech and told them why I was travelling with my daughter, they let us pass. They did warn us that 2-3 KM further along we would be in no-man's land, after which we would be meeting the German army. We walked on, Erika bravely along in a good tempo. Finally we came to the German lines. Early in our hike I had found a long stick and knotted a white handkerchief to the top of it. The Germans asked us if we had been maltreated by the Czechs, but I told them no, all had been helpful. The man who had come with us told fairy tales of how he had been mistreated and worse. A real Nazi-Sudeten German. Finally Erika and I were able to go on. It was not much further to a train station where we were able to catch a train to Leipzig. I did have German Marks.

At ten p.m. we arrived in Leipzig and took a taxi home. Our apartment was dark, no one home, but we were happy to be home. I was sure Georg had gone to Synagogue, this being Rosh Hashanah.

After a short while he came home with some good friends. He had not dared to hope that we would be at home. It was incredible that we had managed this. I remembered all those people, hundreds of them, stuck in Bodenbach, unable to travel on.

We continued our efforts for emigration. Meanwhile the crisis over the Sudetenland was solved. Hitler took it over and all thought that a world war had been avoided.

In October we received our permit to leave Germany. Our belongings were packed and shipped to London (where they were bombed in the Blitz in 1940). Georg had to sign over properties he had in Berlin, as well as his life insurance and pay a huge exit tax of all our money. We left with 10 Mark in our pockets, each, but we were able to leave.

We went to Prague to our little apartment. We had applied for visas to England, the United States, South Africa and Holland, planning to wait in Prague to see which visa would come through. Georg was a well-known specialist in hides and skins and received a visa for Holland and a permit to work there at a large firm, Kaufmann's Huidenhandel, in Rotterdam. But the visa was only for Georg, not for Erika and me.

Georg flew to Holland on the 7th of January 1939. We stayed in Prague and in March the Nazis attacked Czechoslovakia, then occupied it. I was in the apartment, Erika back with the family Ehrmann, where she had been before. She went to school, was now 9 years old, sensible and good. I saw her most days. I had a

dear cousin and her family in Prague. She, Emmy, had moved to Prague from Vienna with her husband and two daughters. The older was Erika's age, the other three years younger. They had tried to escape the Nazis. Emmy's husband, Fritz, was a prominent industrialist, quite well-known. As soon as the Germans had marched into Prague they arrested him and soon murdered him. He was not seen again.

Now pure hell began in Prague. My whole effort was on getting exit visas since we now had received entry visas to Holland. For days and weeks I stood in line from early morning at the office where they could issue these exit permits. My passport was stamped with "J," so all the Germans could see that I was Jewish. Every morning, after I had stood in line for several hours, a Sudeten German soldier came and told me to turn to the wall so no Aryan would have to look at my face. When I finally got to the head of the line, the window closed for the day.

March, April, May and half of June passed like this and I was quite desperate, had hardly any money. Georg earned so little money in Holland that he could not send me any. When we left Germany we had had to leave our whole fortune behind and pay the exit tax. One day when I was again standing in line, I heard one woman tell another about a Major Fuchs in the Peček Palace, the headquarters of the S.S. in Prague. She said that he was a human being, contrary to all the others, but that it would be hard to get to him. That same day, in the afternoon, I dressed

especially well and went to the Pecek Palace. At the entrance stood two S.S. soldiers, helmets on their heads. I told them that Major Fuchs had called me and now expected me. They couldn't believe this since I didn't have a written invitation but one went inside with me, spoke to another S.S. man in the hall and he was also very skeptical. This man walked up a wide staircase and I followed him. He stopped at an office door and I read the card on the door: secretary to Major Fuchs. The S.S. man knocked on the door and the secretary came to the door. He told her what I had told him, but she knew nothing of all this. Just then the door to the inner office opened and a young S.S. officer came into the room. He wanted to know what was going on. I walked right up to him, looked firmly into his eyes and said, "Major Fuchs, you just called me to tell me you wanted to see me and here I am." He was overwhelmed, but said, "Oh yes!" I quickly walked into his office, he came in also, closed the door and asked me what this was all about. I told him that I needed an exit visa for my daughter and myself, had brought all the documents from Leipzig with me, including all we had paid to be able to leave. I told him that my husband was in Holland already for six months. He just looked at me and asked when I wanted to leave. I told him I would leave the next day. He went to his desk and wrote out a permit. I thanked him and left quickly. After the war I tried to find him, unsuccessfully. I should have liked to help him since he had saved our lives. A few weeks

after we left Prague the deportations of Jews from Czechoslovakia started to Auschwitz and Sobibor.

The same day I received the permit I was able to get two seats on a plane from Ruzyn, Prague's airport, via Berlin to Amsterdam. The next day, on June 26, 1939, we arrived in Holland and were reunited with Georg.

We lived in a furnished apartment in Rotterdam, very comfortable. We made some new friends. Erika started school. We had to try to learn the Dutch language quickly. In Prague Erika had been in a Czech school and had learned to speak, read and write Czech very well.

Soon after we arrived in Holland our entry visa to England arrived. South Africa refused our application.

On August 26, 1939, Georg, Erika and I travelled to London. We went to Bow street, received our residence permit. London was totally in a war mode, the sky was full of defensive balloons, the atmosphere very tense. We felt that Holland would not be drawn into the war, but would remain neutral and went back to Holland the day after we had arrived. On the first of September the Second World War broke out.

Now we lived in Rotterdam. Georg worked and we settled in. I found some girlfriends and time flew by. Our main topic of conversation was the war and every night was filled with sounds of airplanes, the English flying to Germany, the Germans flying to England where they bombed London, Coventry and other cities, trying to erase these cities, as Hitler liked to say. The Dutch

tried to shoot these planes down, having the right to do this while being neutral. The winter of 1939-40 passed this way and then came spring.

I played a lot of tennis, had played since I was a young girl, and didn't play badly. At home my parents had had a tennis court put in, next to our villa, where we could all play after school, but also our Mother and her sisters.

One afternoon in 1940, I played again. It was May 9th. A gentleman at the club offered me a ride home since we had no car. We all knew each other as couples. I was glad to accept and on the way home he asked me how we liked living in Holland. I told him we liked it very much, just worried about the danger of war breaking out. He laughed, tried to reassure me, saying how Holland would always stay neutral just as in the First World War.

That night, about 3 a.m., the first bombs fell on Rotterdam and war had arrived. There was a great noise of planes and anti-aircraft fire. I looked out the window, the sun was just starting to rise and to the south of us, where an airport, Waalhaven was. I saw, in front of the house, how men removed barbed wire from a very primitive air raid shelter. It was made of dirt, piled into a long pyramid, an entrance at both ends. It was all above ground, maybe three meters long, two meters wide. Since the neighborhood children had used it as a playground, the city had surrounded it with barbed wire to keep them out. Seeing the barbed wire being removed was final proof for me that war had

broken out for Holland. I turned on the radio, heard reports of bombings and calls for the reserves to report.

We all got dressed, had breakfast and Georg went to the office to see what could be done. By 9 a.m. he was back and at 10 a.m. the police came to pick George up since he was still German according to his passport. He and many others, Jews and non-Jews were interned in the Doelen, the Rotterdam concert hall. There were about 700 people there. Georg took along his toiletries and a towel and a change of clothes. A terrible time of suffering began.

The bombing was not very intensive during the first days, but became more so. Erika and I were not supposed to go outside the house since we were Germans, seen as the enemy! Rumors filled all talk, about spies, especially among the many German maids in the Dutch homes. And there were many. Rotterdam was bravely defended, in the end even in man-to-man fighting, as parachutists landed on the bridges across the Nieuwe Mass and in the port.

On May 13, the sun rose like a fireball and the bombing started very early. I thought of Georg all the time. We had had no news from him at all. On this day I also thought of my Father and Helene in Palestine. It was Helene's birthday. I imagined how worried they must be. May 14th dawned, a fateful day for Rotterdam. Negotiations were underway about surrendering the city and the country, but about 2 p.m. the Germans started bombing Rotterdam very heavily, also with firebombs. All this

while negotiations were going on. The city and especially the center of town were virtually destroyed.

About 3:30 p.m. Georg came home, covered in dust and dirt. The "Doelen" had taken several full hits by bombs. Many had been killed or wounded, but Georg was unhurt, fortunately, and able to escape from the ruins of the building. On the way home he met a young, totally desperate policeman, whom he brought home and tried to calm down. The only water we had to drink in the house was in the bathtub that I had filled just in case. A short while later trucks drove through the streets and we were asked to give linens for the hospitals. Some hospitals were bombed out, others were functioning, but overfull of wounded. There were so many dead and wounded.....

Some parts of the city, near the river, were still in flames. No one was able to put out these fires. Many people were burned to death there and that whole part of town totally destroyed.

A little later we saw many people, whole families or singles, walking out of the destruction of their homes to the outskirts to find family or friends to take shelter.

Now German soldiers marched into Rotterdam after the city and the country had surrendered. The country had been overpowered, there had been no way to avoid this. The queen and her family, as well as the Cabinet, had been able to escape to England at the last moment. Some ordinary people had also been able to reach the coast and take boats to England.

I again thought of my Father and sister, how they must be worried about us, hearing of Holland's fate, but nothing from us. There was no way to contact them or anyone outside the country.

Now the English caused us sleepless nights, bombing Rotterdam harbor every night. Georg could find no rest at night. His memories of the First World War got too powerful for him. All the horrors of his military service came back to him. The battles at Verdun, Arras, Chemin de Dames, where he was wounded, gassed and then taken prisoner. He talked a lot about having tried to escape being prisoner of war, being caught, imprisoned again on Isle de Re and Isle d'Oleron, guarded by Moroccan soldiers with long whips, in cells below water-level and hearing the waves of the Atlantic beat against the walls. All these horrors came back to him.

In the days after the bombardment of Rotterdam, we decided to move to Driebergen for a few days to rest. We liked it there so much, didn't experience the war there at all. After a short while we had to return to Rotterdam. Georg went back to work and Erika went back to school. One day in late September we were notified by the Germans that we had to leave Rotterdam within a few days, as Jews from Germany. We had to move inland and did so, moving to Driebergen and started to live there. Georg commuted to Rotterdam to work.

Erika's Memories.

When the Germans occupied the Netherlands in 1940, I was ten years old. I had lived in Germany for eight years, one year in Czechoslovakia and now in Holland since June 1939. I learned to speak Dutch quickly, went to school in Rotterdam for a short while, till all German Jews were expelled from the coastal cities by the Nazis, presumably because the Germans were dreaming of invading England and we, German Jews, would be able to stop them. This was only the first of many, many measures taken against Jews.

Holland had always been a very tolerant country, giving all groups and religions freedom. Already during the Spanish Inquisition many Jews made their way North, to the Netherlands, and were well received, able to practice their religion.

We moved to Driebergen, a small garden spot of a town in the rural part of Holland, surrounded by cattle farms and orchards. First we rented rooms, later in 1941 a small house, then at the end of 1941 a larger house for which my parents bought furniture and everything we needed. They hired a gardener to plant a lovely garden with shrubs, bushes of raspberries and flowers. Most of their friends declared them "crazy" for planning a normal life when the deportations of Jews to the concentration camps had already started. They, however, remained optimistic.

My Father commuted to Rotterdam by train every day, after a time wearing the yellow star of David with the word "Jood" (Jew)

in Dutch on this jacket and coat. We all had to wear this star beginning in 1941 whenever we were outdoors. I went to school in Driebergen until Jews were no longer allowed in public schools, some time in early 1942. After this time I travelled by train to Utrecht, a larger city, not far from Driebergen where there was a Jewish school. I rode with my Father in the morning on the train, returned in the afternoon by myself. At first we rode our bikes to the train, but not for long, when we were no longer allowed to own bikes. These were confiscated, along with all radios, gold and valuables. Then we walked to the train, about a half an hour.

At the school we were taught by Jewish teachers, in all subjects, but every day it all became more difficult. Some teachers and students would be missing having been arrested and deported. By the summer of 1942 the school ceased to exist. My Father, travelling to Rotterdam, had a special permit issued by the Germans since train travel was not allowed for Jews. As it was, he often encountered Dutch Nazis who made him stand, instead of letting him sit, abusing him, telling him to face the wall and calling him names. The company where he worked had been Jewish owned, but since the owners escaped at the start of the war, was run and managed by non-Jews, trading in hides and skins for leather purposes, all of which the Germans needed. We all had special identity cards, stamped with a "J" for Jew and carrying special numbers assigned to various groups. Our family had a high number on account of my Father's work, considered

necessary by the Germans. These numbers were supposed to protect us from deportation until one day in 1943, everything changed.

For the last year my parents and I, to a certain extent, knew what was happening to those who were deported. People saw the trains go towards the East, saw how the Jews on these trains were treated and reports filtered back from Poland telling horrific tales.

One day a lady went around Driebergen visiting Jewish homes showing some pictures, but mostly letters from the ghetto's and camps, telling details of the atrocities. She was a Quaker lady, whom none of us knew, who put herself in great danger to warn people of what awaited us. Her stories also encouraged people to try and make arrangements to hide, to find Dutch families who would take the enormous risks of hiding Jews, single or as a family.

Around this time my Father's sister, Bertha, her husband and daughter, Hilda, were deported from the Dutch concentration camp, Westerbork. They and a few hundred Jews had been on the infamous ship "St. Louis," that left Germany in 1939 full of emigrants, all Jewish, hoping to escape to the Western Hemisphere. When they came to Havana, in Cuba, into the harbor, they were refused entry, then in Miami the same. The ship had to return to Europe with all the passengers, landing first in Rotterdam harbor where several hundred passengers were allowed to disembark, the others were returned to Germany. The camp organized to house these people in Holland was Westerbork. When the Germans occupied

Holland, they found a functioning camp and used this as the start for a concentration camp through which most Jewish deportees passed on their way East to all the various concentration camps.

My aunt and family were sent to Theresienstadt-Terezin, near Prague. My aunt Bertha and Hilda survived the war there, but my Uncle was sent to Poland and perished.

My parents still felt secure, having these special numbers, but one day, April 13, 1943, a young man in civilian clothes rang our bell, identified himself as a policeman in Driebergen and told us that this same evening, after curfew, we three were to be arrested. The special numbers would no longer protect us. My Father had not been allowed to work for some weeks, so we were all at home. This young man, Esmeyer, told us that he worked with the resistance and would help us to get away, but especially my Father. My Mother and I would have to fend for ourselves till he could find a home for us. We have to trust him.

Towards evening my Father walked a few blocks. We followed him till he was met at a designated spot by Esmeyer with two bikes. They got on and rode away.

My Mother and I were terrified, but she kept her wits about her, packed a few things for the two of us and then we went next door to our neighbor who had agreed to let us stay the night. She was alone with her baby, not Jewish and very brave. Her husband, a Jew, was in hiding in Belgium. My Mother and I went up to her attic and, sure enough, after dark, police came to our door, knocked and shouted for us to open the door. When they

realized that we were not there, they put seals on the front and back door, then went away.

In the morning we left our neighbor's house. We had removed the yellow stars from our clothes and walked to the next town, Zeist, where we had friends. This couple, Selowski, a mixed marriage, were living in a lovely boarding house run by Dutch people. Kurt Selowski had been a lawyer in Berlin and his much younger wife was from Vienna, where she had been an actress at the Burgtheater. To reach them we walked about 5 KM (over 3 miles), just carrying small bundles, so as not to attract attention.

The Selowski's were quite surprised to see us, especially without stars, but welcomed us. They were willing to have us stay, but their landlord would allow us only one or two nights in the house. Considering the danger we exposed everyone in the house to, we were glad to even just stay a short time.

The next day our savior, Esmeyer, appeared in the afternoon, told us that my Father was well and that we could meet him on the other side of town on a wooded path near a large church. At dark, but well before curfew, we went there, met my Father and a young man, the son of the lady where my Father was staying. The young man asked us to come back to the house for a cup of tea and to meet his mother. As soon as we were there, she offered my Mother and me to stay there also, so we would have a hiding place for the three of us. This was a grand, very touching offer, hard to understand today, but then it meant that she put herself, a

widow, as well as her two young adult sons, in mortal danger, to help and save us from certain death if caught by the Nazis.

This family, Barends, lived in a very nice home. The oldest son was in Indonesia all during the war and there was no contact with him. The middle son, Jan, was at home, did odd jobs openly and worked in the resistance secretly. He also was a black market dealer, thus being able to bring his mother food not otherwise available. There was a daughter, Annie, living away from home, a school teacher. The youngest, Pieter, was a theology student, at home, since the universities were closed, studying quietly with a local minister in town. This minister soon heard of our presence in the Barends' home.

Through our friend, Esmeyer, we were given false identity papers, since everyone needed to have papers, also ration cards. My father was given his just in case, since he could not go outside the house at all, except in the dark, before curfew, as he had a quite Jewish face and also spoke Dutch poorly. My mother and I had papers as refugees from bombed out Rotterdam, my Mother born in Germany, married to a Dutch military officer, serving in Germany and I, the daughter. With the ration cards we could get whatever food might be available in a store.

Food soon became very, very scarce. My Mother somehow got a bike and started to ride into the countryside visiting farms and looking for food. I was now thirteen and needed to continue learning, but unable to attend school. Now Pieter Barends, with the help of the minister teaching him, got some school books from

the local Lyceum and proceeded to teach me a full program of Greek, Latin, Dutch literature and mathematics. Once in a while they made me take an exam and I really learned a lot, kept busy and all enjoyed these efforts.

At this time all men in Holland were supposed to be working for the Germans in whatever capacity, but no one was to be "at home." There were many "razzias" and all men caught, those that were not Jewish, were shipped to Germany as slave labor. Many houses had hidden rooms or compartments in the houses where men would hide as soon as word got out that a razzia was beginning.

We started our stay with Mrs. Barends in mid April 1943, but after two weeks Easter came and she expected her daughter home with a friend the family didn't know. Mrs. Barends wanted us to leave until they went back to their jobs teaching so they wouldn't know about us hiding in the house. For that time we moved about a block away to a family Coumou, also very observant Christians, Dutch Reformed, like the Barends.

Mr. and Mrs. Coumou had a son and a daughter. The son was a law student, the daughter was a nurse. When we had first come to Mrs. Barends, her son, Jan, and the Coumou son, Piet, had gone to our house in Driebergen, in the dark, broken the seals on the back door and carried away our stove, pots and pans, some suitcases my Mother had previously packed. They brought all this to Zeist at great risk to themselves.

We shared the Coumou's holiday and great kindness, then went back to Mrs. Barends. The Coumou's meanwhile had several other Jews hiding in their house.

Not far from Zeist is a large air field, then used by the Germans, that the Allies bombed periodically. They would drop flares, then bombs, that shook the whole area, especially when ammunition dumps were hit. We were quite used to all this. One lovely summer evening we were outside in front of the house and a full moon had just risen, large and orange. I pointed this out to my Mother as a flare, but for once she could assure me that it was the moon.

During the summer, still 1943, we heard that people with the same numbers on their I.D. cards we had as Jews were going to be allowed to travel to Spain and via Portugal to South America. Great sums of money were being paid the Germans in exchange for these permits by Jews overseas. To be part of this group, those who were still left in Holland, we had to come out of hiding. My parents decided that we could best show up living in Amsterdam where there were still quite a few Jews left, and even a functioning Jewish school in the former Jewish part of the city. We had a friend, a German lady, not Jewish, who had lived for many years with a Jewish man who had escaped to Switzerland. She found us an apartment around the corner from where she lived.

We lived there for the summer. I walked to school, a long way, and here also, some children or teachers were missing just as in Utrecht, having been deported.

Nothing came of the plan to travel to Spain.

Our apartment was on the third floor. There were no elevators. One night we heard a terrible commotion in the stairwell. The Germans were shouting, knocking on all the doors looking for Jews. On the top floor a young Jew had an apartment. They broken down the door, found him hiding there and beat him savagely all the way down the stairs. They found some other Jews in the house. The screaming and pounding were terrible. My Father, Mother and I dared not breathe, didn't open the door and like a miracle the Nazis passed our door on the way down. A terrifying night.

In the morning my parents thought I should go to school and I went, yellow star on my coat, bookbag in hand. I had only gone a block or so when a man opened his front door at street level, called me to the door and asked me if I didn't know what had been going on in the night and was still in progress even then. I told him that since we had these special numbers we were exempted, we thought. He told me to cover the yellow star with my bookbag, to go home and tell my parents that this razzia was specifically for people with the "special" numbers. This was a clean-up razzia. There would be no more school or life for Jews. Walking back I saw many trucks loaded with Jews being driven away, walked away as well, in large groups.

This "clean-up" razzia became known in the country though there was no radio broadcast in Holland and people had no radios

anyway anymore. There was a Nazi sponsored paper that people could buy, but which really had no news anyone wanted to believe.

The resistance movement collected some news and distributed this, as well as getting some news to England secretly. From there this news was broadcast to Holland and other occupied countries and was heard by some with secretly kept radios. We and some very few people had radios, used them very sparingly and on very low volume, as it was a capital crime to be caught with a radio.

Our friends in Zeist, Coumou, heard of the big razzia in Amsterdam and the daughter, To, came to see us right away. She urged us to come back to Zeist and so we did, at great danger, but staying in Amsterdam would have meant certain deportation. She accompanied us, putting herself in danger of her life, but we made it!

Our German lady friend from Amsterdam, Ellen Muller, kept us at her apartment overnight till we could travel to Zeist. There we went back to Mrs. Barends. From then on, Ellen came to see us sometimes, riding a bike from Amsterdam to Zeist with no tires, just a garden hose in place of tires. She would eat with us and my parents always sent her back home with some extra food, whatever we had to share. She remained a good friend of our family, survived the war, but not easily.

After we had left Amsterdam, a Red Cross letter came to her address with our name on it. The Germans arrested her, put her in a jail cell with a man who tried to get her to tell him about

us. He was a "plant." She kept on claiming not to know anything about us, but was interrogated for days. She held up and was eventually let go.

Another time while at Mrs. Barends, her daughter and her friend wanted to come home, so we had to leave for those days. We went to stay with a lady who was hiding two young Jewish men, one of whom we knew from before our time in hiding. These fellows had dug a room beneath the floor in her living room where they slept and stayed most of the time. They never went out. While there was electric power, they had a lamp to read by and would come into the house at night for a short time only. We stayed at that house for the few days only. The two men survived!

All the time we lived at Mrs. Barends' home, we learned much about the Christian, Dutch Reformed, religion. We all took our meals together at a well-set table, always a white tablecloth and white napkins. We kept our napkins in white cloth envelopes with our name written on the envelopes so we could re-use the napkins for a few days. Before starting our meals, Mrs. Barends read a chapter of the "Old Testament" and after we finished, a chapter of the "New Testament." We moved right along in this reading and became quite familiar with the stories in both books. We three were not very well versed in any of this. Though my Father had been Bar Mitzva, he had not had the opportunity to learn very much of our history and traditions other than what his mother had been able to provide in preparation for Bar Mitzva. My Mother

had been raised pretty much without religion and knew very little about Judaism. What both my parents had was a very strong sense, awareness and pride in being Jewish, and they gave me these feelings as well.

Living in the Barends' home, one son, a theology student, and the very religious Christian atmosphere, talk turned to conversion to Christianity. Mrs. Barends lived her religion fully. She was a true believer and told us that the reason she risked her life as well as that of her family for us was because the Bible states that Jews are God's chosen people! She felt it her duty to protect us and do whatever possible to save us.

Her son, Pieter, shared her feelings as did Jan, but Pieter tried his very best to convert my Father, arguing and discussing the two religions at great length. He was, of course, very fluent in the language of Christianity, also very knowledgeable of Judaism and my Father didn't have all the facts and arguments in his head. He only knew that he was a Jew, would stay so until his end, but was at a disadvantage in these long discussions. It was very difficult, even painful, for my Father to keep arguing and being tested over and over, by this young man fresh out of university. Of course, my Father also would not offend our rescuer in any way by telling him to stop, to leave us alone. Pieter tried the same with my Mother and me, but was not so insistent.

Every once in a while we heard of Jews being caught by the Nazis and became even more careful. We knew of Jan's exploits

though never any details. One day a sharp warning came that the police were looking for Jan, would come to the house soon though he was not there with us. It had been arranged for just such an eventuality that my Father would leave through the back door, over a fence and go to a house on the next street where also other Jews were hidden. Next I was to leave, on a bicycle, with a large briefcase holding our secret radio and peddle up the street to a house where we knew the people, though they didn't know we were hiding nearby. The husband had taught me in Driebergen when I couldn't go to school any longer. This man, his wife and pianist daughter were quite surprised to see me on their doorstep, but let me in and I stayed a few days. My Mother had nowhere to go, took to the woods and stayed hidden overnight. It was all very dangerous, life threatening for everyone and with no end in sight.

Eventually my Mother made her way to where my Father was, was allowed to stay and shortly I joined them again. This was a smaller house, more people there, also the family themselves larger and again with younger men hiding as well.

This family, Stromenberg, was also very religious, kept us safe until war's end.

Meanwhile Jan Barends had been hiding out with friends, quite far away, but was finally caught. A horrible fate awaited him. He was deported to a concentration camp, mistreated and finally died, hanged upside down. His mother was notified that he died of pneumonia, but she later found out the truth. We

visited her, but didn't stay there anymore. I did continue my lessons for a time, then just studied on my own.

September 1944 came, the Allies had landed in France in June. We all thought the end of the war would come soon. As the battles near Arnhem were fought, we could hear the cannons firing, heard the planes, got ready to welcome freedom. But it was too soon. One day Mrs. Coumou asked my Mother and many others to meet at a large house in town to sew armbands and flags for when we would be liberated so the troops could differentiate between freedom fighters and traitors. All these armbands, etc. were not needed yet, for a very long time, not till after the terrible hunger-winter of 1944-45.

The Germans had a headquarters in Zeist, in the school, the Lyceum. There were no students or teachers there anymore. One day I walked past the entrance with my Mother and as we looked up, a horse-drawn cart came towards us with two men driving it. To our horror we saw that we knew both men, Jews, one a friend from our Rotterdam days and the other, we had thought not Jewish, who had taught me French in Driebergen when I could no longer go to school and was given private lessons. They were prisoners of the Germans, working in Zeist. They nor we acknowledged each other though we all saw each other. They were glad to be working there, not being deported yet and realized that we were in hiding in the area since we wore no stars. It was a moment that made us feel the world stood still for an instant. We kept walking, they rode on and not till well after the war did we hear that they had

both survived. Our friend from Rotterdam, Boy Frenk, and his wife, were deported to Bergen-Belsen, but came back and though his wife died quite a few years ago, we are still good friends with him and see him in Rotterdam.

Now food was really in short supply, our rations of inedible bread, no fats or milk, some potatoes or sugarbeets. My Mother would go out looking to find food most days on a bicycle, mostly together with Mr. Stromenberg, but not always. One day she heard that the Germans would open the dikes and flood large farm areas between Utrecht and Amsterdam to stop the Allies from landing by parachutes. She rode to that area already flooding and started to pick spinach. Suddenly allied planes came over, flying low, shooting at anything that moved. She threw down her bicycle and jumped into a foxhole by the side of the road. There were German soldiers around and she was afraid that they would steal her bike, but they left her alone, able to come back with a large bag full of spinach.

Some days she would try to trade for food, exchanging some possessions for salt or flour. We had just about no money, so barter was the only way to trade.

In late September and October she went to the area, the Betuwe, between the large rivers in Holland, the beautiful orchard area, picking apples in large quantities for us all. The local farmers would give people permission to do this rather than let the Germans take the fruit.

Meanwhile my Father, unable to go out and help to provide, would work all day on a sugar beet. Since we had no gas or electricity anymore, nor coal for a furnace, he took small kindling and kept a metal cylinder on top of a small stove in which he burned the kindling, to heat a pot of water to boil the cut up sugar beet. This was hard, needed to boil for hours, after which he would create various dishes as meals for us. All from one sugar beet. It was nourishing and when one is hungry, one doesn't discuss the taste.

The apples my Mother brought home were carefully laid out on top of a closet to be saved through the winter, shared by all in the house. The closet was in the room where I slept. Most nights I went to bed hungry and helped myself to an apple. After some weeks, when the grownups came looking for the apples for the household to share, the supply was smaller than expected. I felt very guilty, but they all understood and no one scolded me.

My parents had at first been in touch with Esmeyer and through him with one or two others in the resistance, as well as Piet Coumou. Suddenly we heard that Esmeyer and a friend had tried to free some fellow resistance workers from a police station jail. Their attempt was unsuccessful, they were caught and shortly executed by the Nazis. They are buried in Driebergen where we now visit their graves. A large police barracks in Holland was named for Esmeyer after the war.

One of the other resistance men, de Man was his alias, came to visit sometimes. One day he was terribly upset, told us that

they had discovered a traitor who had endangered many resistance workers, causing some to be caught. He and several men in the local resistance group held a trial in someone's basement, listened to the traitor, but found him guilty. They had shot him, buried him secretly. This was a local man, married to a local girl. He, de Man, had himself gone to tell the man's parents after it was all over.

During the winter of 1944-45 hunger came in earnest to Holland. In the cities people died from starvation since there was no access to food, or to plots of land to grow something edible, or to go to the countryside and beg or trade for food from the farmers. The Germans made all the farms and orchards give up all they grew in food, all the milk and vegetables, but these farmers were always able to hold back a little for their families and to barter with hungry fellow citizens. By now my Mother was constantly out on her bike looking for food. This was getting more difficult all the time. Even the German soldiers had little food. This winter was called the hunger-winter for good reason. Everyone suffered, there was no coal, gas or electricity. We were not allowed to cut down trees for firewood. If one was caught having large logs of wood, this was confiscated and the punishment was arrest and sometimes worse.

Toward spring word got out that the Red Cross would arrange for planes to fly over, low, no anti aircraft would be shooting, and drop bread and margarine to be distributed to the population. It is hard to describe the feeling of anticipation. Finally the

day came, the drops were made and the bread and margarine brought to assembly points for distribution. Most people were quite disciplined, but some just fell on this food, eating some before getting to their home to share with their families. These food drops were made several times over the last months of the war. We were told that the food came from Sweden, but wherever it was from, it made our life a little more liveable and the hunger pangs less. My Father kept on cooking a sugar beet every day for us to eat as a vegetable, or squeezed out and "fried" as a pancake. I suppose it was nourishing, though it didn't taste good.

Thanks to my parents we had the radio and could listen everyday to the BBC from London. They gave news in many languages, but we listened to the news in English and also in Dutch. When Winston Churchill spoke, we heard his speeches, sometimes the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina spoke, but mostly we heard news of the war, the progress of the allies, words of encouragement to keep our spirits up. My Father never learned to speak English, but he could understand it and I think that I learned a lot of English from these broadcasts.

Earlier in our hiding time at Mrs. Barends, her daughter decided to move back home. Now her mother told her about us and she was then as devoted to our safety as her mother and brothers. By then she had broken up with her friend whom the family didn't trust. This daughter, Annie, had a girlfriend living in the same neighborhood who used to be an English teacher. It was arranged

that I should take lessons from her and I did for some time, learning a lot.

Our great disappointment was that the allies were unable to free all of Holland after the battle at Arnhem. We were near enough to hear the fighting, but they were unable to cross the big rivers between North and South Holland that fall and so we had to endure that hunger-winter. We knew freedom was so near, but yet it was far, a world away. There was some contact between the resistance and the allies on the other side. Sometimes one or two men would walk and row across for various reasons, also to get arms. This was very fortunate since one day the Stromenberg's daughter-in-law gave birth to a healthy baby, but herself suffered a terrible infection. She was a nurse herself, knew her situation, but also had heard of the discovery of penicillin. The family was quite aware of my parents contact with the underground, with one powerful leader especially. It was arranged by my parents that the next time someone went across the allied lines he should bring back enough penicillin to treat her. Sure enough this was done, she recovered and many years later she happened to be my Father's nurse after a serious operation in Rotterdam. Quite a coincidence.

One day I was out of the house, it was April 12, 1945, when someone told me that they had heard on the radio that President Roosevelt had died. I ran home, knowing that this would be very bad news. My parents and everyone was terribly upset, not knowing what the future would bring now. As it was, President

Truman pursued the same war effort and the loss was more symbolic for us than anything else.

Finally spring came, the fighting came closer to us again and on May 8, 1945, the Germans surrendered and we were liberated. We knew the English and Canadian troops would come soon. The Germans were still dangerous though they prepared to retreat, but would shoot at the slightest provocation. Then we heard "They" were coming along the road from Arnhem. We and thousands lined the road, most people had found old flags or orange bunting, the color of the royal family. All waved, everyone was laughing and crying when we finally saw the Jeeps and armored cars come up the road, also tanks and all kinds of military vehicles. The English troops were our liberators.

I was fifteen, still a child, just happy and curious what life would bring. My parents and all adults were quite overcome, though very happy.

I saw a girl I knew a little and together we climbed on a tank, were given a ride to the next town. Then we walked back. All were giddy, wanted to celebrate, but didn't know how.

The troops were spread out around the towns. They lived in tents in the squares or along the roads through the woods surrounding Zeist, Driebergen and all the small towns.

After a few days I walked past an encampment of just a few tents with another girl. Two soldiers, sergeants, asked us if we lived nearby, which we did. They asked if they could come to visit our families. She hesitated, but I invited them to come to

where we lived, just warning them that we had no food to offer them. They just wanted to visit a family and offered to bring some food and tea.

Sure enough they came. My parents welcomed them. They brought along some canned fish, some tea that tasted of diesel oil from their vehicle, but great to us. They also brought a bottle of Scotch whiskey. They offered the adults a drink after we had had the tea, poured some Scotch into glasses and said: Say when!, an English expression we didn't know. It means to tell the person pouring when to stop pouring. Well, they stopped pouring anyway. We learned a new expression and all laughed.

After a week or two we went back to Driebergen to look for the house where we had lived. It was there, but all our belongings had been taken away. A collaborator family had been put into the house, had furnished it, but now had fled along with the Germans. We soon were able to move in using their furnishings.

Later on my parents bought most of the things in the house from the Dutch government and we used it till we could buy new things for our apartment in Rotterdam where we moved in 1947.

As soon as trains started to run, my Father travelled to Rotterdam, began to work again, getting a start by selling merchandise he had had hidden in someone's barn in Driebergen. The family Kaufmann, owners of the company where he worked, returned to Holland and business started again.

I went to school in Zeist, to the Lyceum, now converted again into a school. My studying during the war helped me, even the non-Jewish kids had not been to school for over a year and we all just picked up as did the teachers and we went on....! I took what was called the classical education, studying Greek, Latin, French, English and German. Of course, we all spoke Dutch, the language of Holland, just studied the literature, as well as Math, history and geography.

After finishing school in 1948, I worked at friends' photography studio for about half a year, learning about developing, printing, retouching and managing the office. It was interesting, but not enough.

In May 1948, the State of Israel was established. Right after this wonderful event, all the Arab countries attacked the State, cutting Jerusalem off from the rest of the country and trying to destroy the new State. But Israel prevailed against great odds, an armistice was signed and life began for the new State though with big problems. Food was in short supply, the economy had not had a chance to get a start, immigrants streamed in from Europe as well as the Arab countries. These Jews wanted to escape persecution in Europe and in the Arab countries which opposed the establishment of the State of Israel, a homeland for all Jews.

In the year 1933, just as Hitler came to power in Germany and a financial depression affected the economies of Germany and Austria, my Aunt Helene Roth, Renee's sister, travelled to what

was then Palestine, ruled by the English as a mandate. It was a poor area, but some Jews felt that they wanted to live there, hard as life was and eventually to establish a Jewish state. Helene was an engineer-architect, the first woman graduate in this field in Vienna, but having a hard time making a living. She was not married. Helene travelled to Palestine by ship at the suggestion of my Father, Georg Hollaender, since he knew several people from Leipzig who were planning to be on this ship and looking to invest money in the future of Palestine, later to become Israel. Helene went, loved what she saw and never came back to Europe to live. She was an early immigrant who helped to shape the country.

In 1934, my Grandmother, Ida Roth, died in Vienna where she and my Grandfather Ferdinand Roth were living in retirement. When he became a widower, my Grandfather also moved to Palestine, a decision that certainly saved his life when the Nazis took over and murdered almost all the Jews in Austria.

In 1949, not long after the birth of Israel, my Mother, Father and I took a trip to Israel to see my Grandfather and Helene, but also the country. We had a wonderful trip, saw all there was to see. After two weeks my Father went back to Holland, a week later my Mother went, too, but I stayed on. First I studied at a home-economics school, mostly to learn Ivriet, the language of Israel. After that I worked at a resort hotel on the beach at Herzliya. I liked living in Israel very much. I made friends and learned many things. My basic home was

with Helene during my days off. At the end of six months I went back to Holland for a while, then on to Switzerland to study hotel-management in Lausanne.

At the well-known Ecole Hoteliere in Lausanne, I met my future husband, Jerry Maurer. We both studied several subject of hotel and restaurant management, but in the end decided not to make our life in that field. Instead I went home and Jerry found a job working as a civilian for the American military in Germany with the Army of occupation. By 1952, we were able to get married, settled in Munich where our older son, Daniel, was born in 1953. The following year, 1954, we were transferred to Nurnberg and lived in a very nice house there. When Danny was a year old we took a trip to the USA to see the grandparents Maurer, Harry and Mildred, and also for me to get my American citizenship, something possible under a special law at the time. We stayed for six weeks, visiting all the family and I became a citizen with my Mother-in-law as my character witness!

Back in Nurnberg, our younger son, David, was born in 1955 and when he was one year old we moved to America for good. This was very difficult for my parents since at that time one didn't travel so easily and often across the Atlantic and even phone calls were reserved for any special occasions.

In 1957, Jerry's Father died suddenly and we stayed on in his and Mildred's house until we bought our own house later that year in Elizabeth.

In this house we enjoyed many good years until suddenly, in 1964, our son, Danny, was diagnosed with cancer. After two years exactly he died. He was thirteen years old.

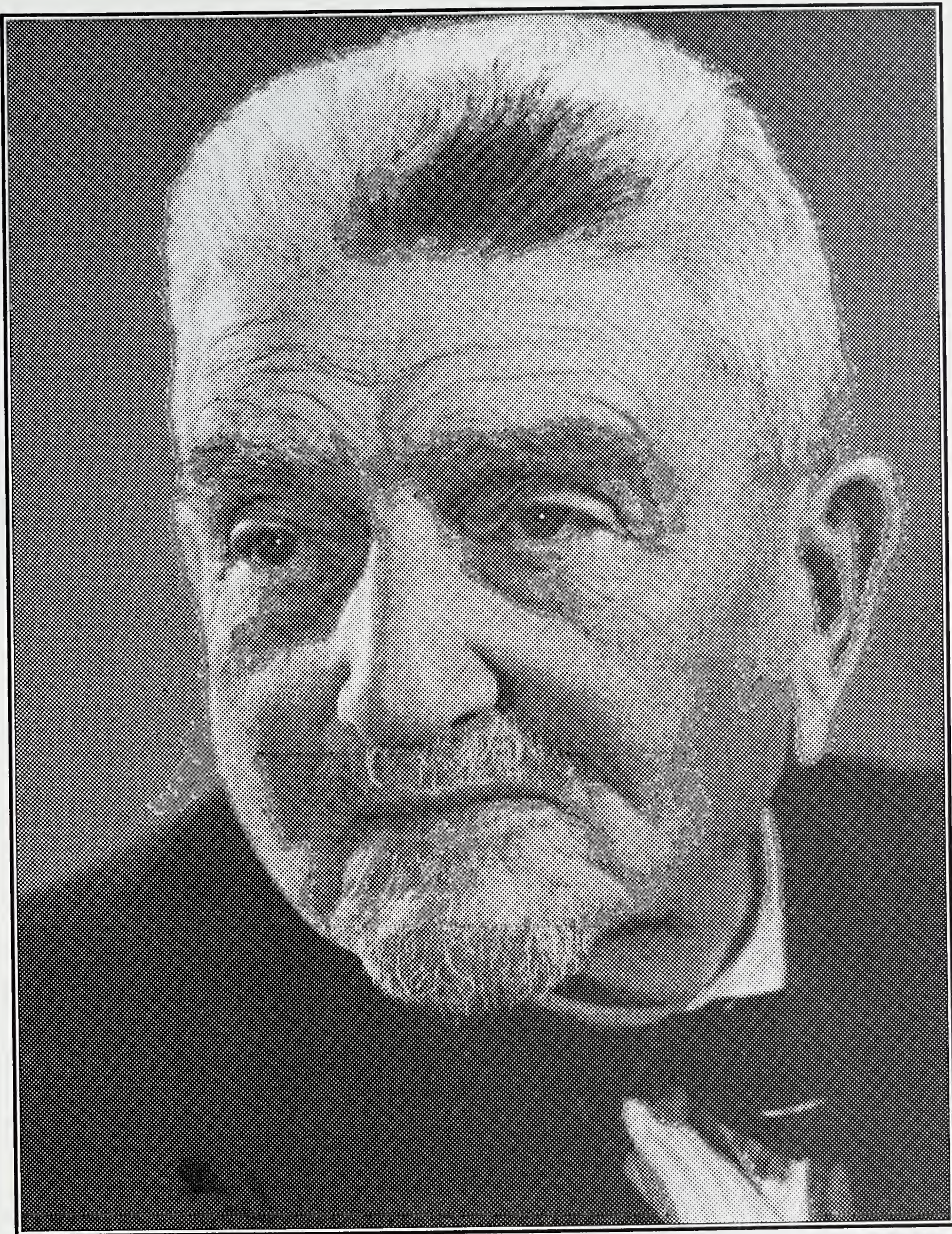
Our son, David, went through the schools in Elizabeth, was active in sports, took trips with us to Europe on many occasions visiting the grandparents in Holland and enjoying great summer vacations. He went to study at the University of Miami and after a few years there met his future wife, Debra. They were married in 1979 and in time had three wonderful children: Greg, Rita and Sam.



Doris Hollaender
Mother of Georg



Ida Roth-Ehrenfreurd
Mother of Renée



Ferdinand Roth
Father of Renée



Renée and Georg Hollaender
1942



Erika Hollaender
1940



Renée Hollaender
1947



Georg Hollaender
1947



Erika Hollaender
1947

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